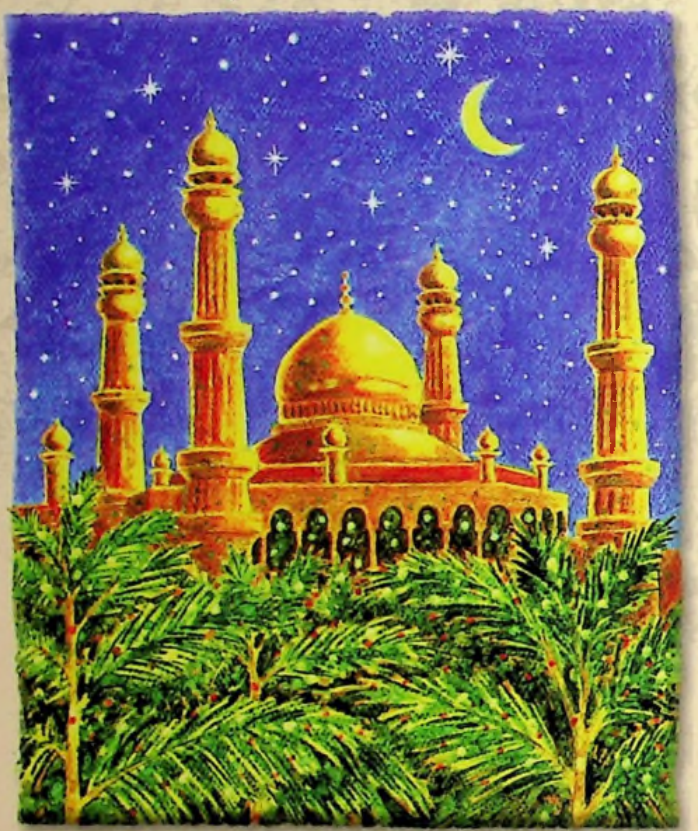
Ramadan Rhapsody

A Daily Celebration



Linda "iLham" Barto

amana publications

Designed to enhance the flavor of Ramadan, this delightful book is a daily celebration of the Muslims' month of fasting. *Ramadan Rhapsody* is a delicious blend of poems, prayers, and Qur'anic renderings arranged in a day-by-day, devotional adventure. Each day begins with a Qur'anic passage, which is followed by one of the Prophet's teachings. The devotion continues with an exuberant poem and ends with a powerful prayer. This little book is big on inspiration as it offers the joy of Ramadan as a rare delicacy. It is certain to dazzle your spiritual taste buds and add spice to your Ramadan experience.

Linda "iLham" Barto is an author and illustrator in the foothills of North Carolina. Among her many works are *Backpacks Full of Love* (Zakat Foundation), *Where the Ghost Camel Grins* (Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an), and *The Bible and the Qur'an at the Edge of Renaissance: A Judeo-Christian-Muslim Compass to a World of Peace* (Mill City Press). She is one of the authors of *Islam Our Choice* (amana publications).

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Ramadan Rhapsody

A Daily Celebration

Poems, Illustrations,
Prayers & Qur'anic Renderings
by
Linda "iLham" Barto

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BISMALLAH
AL RAHMAN AL RAHEEM
Blessed and Exalted
the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

MUHAMMED
SEAL OF THE PROPHETS
May the PEACE & BLESSINGS of Allah
Be Upon Him

In Loving Memory of Toy

(Toyce Granger, the author's sister)
1932-2009

Introduction

The purpose of fasting is much more than just abstaining from food and drink, and the purpose of prayer is more than mere ritual. Improving one's conduct, learning self-discipline, and communing with Allah[1] (blessed and exalted is He) are quests that one must conscientiously pursue.

Prophet Muhammed (peace and blessings upon him) said, "Some people who fast get nothing from their fast except hunger and thirst, and some people who pray at night get nothing from it except lack of sleep."[2]

Writing about Ramadan was my way of getting more than hunger, thirst, and lack of sleep. Insh'Allah,[3] my writing will add a bit of adventure to the reader's Ramadan experience so that the pangs of fasting may be forgotten in a rhapsody of lyrics. For the non-Muslim reader, herein is a grand opportunity to visit Islam from inside the hearts of worshippers. Instead of merely reading *about* Islam, you are invited to participate in an Islamic escapade.

In a popular hadeeth,[4] it is said, "[Ramadan] is a month in which the beginning is for mercy, the core is for forgiveness, and the conclusion is for freedom from the fire."[5] The first phase of the fasting experience brings salvation by grace. When a person conscientiously pursues righteousness, Allah's mercy will be granted to the believer just as he or she is. It is only by His grace and mercy that our sins are erased and we are spiritually revived.

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[1] The Arabic word 'Allah' means 'the God' and is related to the Aramaic word 'Elah,' which was used by Jesus (peace upon him). The Hebrew word 'El' is also linked to the Aramaic and is most often used for 'God' in the Jewish Bible. The prolonged emphatic form of 'El' is 'Eloah.' Clearly, the three Abrahamic faiths use names of the same peaceful sound of 'ahhh.' It's tragic that we can't all get together on that same tune.

[2] Reported by Abu Hurayra and recorded by Darimi.

[3] 'Insh'Allah,' which means 'God willing,' is one of the most commonly used phrases among Muslims. We must not plan anything without acknowledging God's power to make or break a situation. As Mr. Wilson, in the Dennis the Menace cartoons, observed, "If you want to make God laugh, tell Him your future plans."

[4] A 'hadeeth' (also spelled 'hadith') is a teaching of Prophet Muhammed, which is not part of the Qur'an. The Arabic plural is 'ahadeeth', but, in English, it is commonly pluralized 'hadeeths,' although the entire collection is usually called 'the Hadeeth.' Included in the Hadeeth is the Sunnah, which contains examples from the Prophet's life and from that of the early Islamic community

[5] Excerpt from an extensive hadeeth, narrated by Salman Farsi, reported by Ibn Khuzayma (Mishkat: Kitab al Saum). (Other versions reported by Ibn Abiddunya and Bayhaqi.)

When the conscious mind is in complete submission, the subconscious mind soon begins to follow. In the midst of fasting, the believer's sinful inclination becomes overwhelmed by Allah's dominion, and it is then that the believer begins to earn forgiveness and an assurance of salvation.

Finally, when the believer has truly submitted his or her whole self –mind, body, and soul— Ramadan helps to mold a believer into Allah's servant in every facet of life. The servant lives by the commandments of Allah (blessed!), witnesses for Allah in word and deed, becomes a responsible trustee of natural resources and synthetic blessings, and respects his or her own body (which rightfully belongs to Allah) by living a healthy, productive life. With such a full and active commitment to Allah (blessed!), the believer will earn Allah's favor and then be rewarded with the ultimate achievement, which is salvation from the fire of Hell and admittance into Heaven and the restored Paradise.

In each of my daily Ramadan devotions, I offer a taste-berry of Ramadan delights so that each Ramadan day will be flavored with a numinous spice. Ramadan is the Muslim's tent revival –the tent being the solitude and providence that enfolds each of us like a cloak. May your Ramadan adventure be one that nourishes you with the sustenance of Paradise and clothes you with the brilliant light of Allah's grace!

Day 1

Guidance

O Believers, fasting is decreed for you as it was for those before you, so that you may fear and obey Allah[6] You must fast for a number of days, but, if you are sick or traveling, you may make up missed days later. If you are able to fast but only with extreme difficulty, you may be excused from the fast by providing food for someone in need. But it is more advantageous to whoever freely gives more [fasting plus providing food for the poor]. If you only knew how good fasting is for you!

Ramadan is the month in which was revealed the Qur'an as guidance for Humanity and as evidence of that guidance and as a criterion [for distinguishing right from wrong]. Every available person should spend the month fasting, but a person who is sick or traveling may substitute other days. Allah wants to accommodate you and not make things difficult for you to complete the prescribed number of days for His glory because of His guidance; for that, you should be grateful.

Inspired by [7] Al Baqarah (The Heifer) 2: 183-185

Allah's Messenger (peace upon him) said, "When the month of Ramadan comes, the gates of Paradise are opened, and the gates of Hell are locked and the devils are chained." [8]

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[6] The name 'Ramadan' is derived from an Arabic word associated with burning. In the process of intense and devoted prayer and fasting, the devotee burns away the energies of worldly concerns and then trusts God to reconstruct energies of reverence for Him and obedience to His will. Fearing God is to acknowledge His awesome power and to realize the importance of living in complete submission to Him. Ramadan gives the devotee the opportunity to burn vain energies and to change their composition into self-discipline and divine awareness so that the devotee may attain spiritual success.

[7] My Qur'anic renderings are based on intense research through seventeen different translations of the Qur'an. I use the words "inspired by..." to remind the reader that any translation cannot duplicate the Qur'anic Arabic with its goldmine of rich meanings. My goal was to reflect the elegance of the Qur'an in the mirror of my own passion for lovely English prose. To help readers unfamiliar with the style of the Qur'an, words in brackets are my additions for clarification or information; words in parentheses are substituted words, usually nouns replacing pronouns.

[8] Hadeeth: Muslim: reported by Abu Hurayra. When a person is intent in fasting, praying, and meditating, the positive energies that he or she emanates repel the evil forces and energies that abound in this life of struggle.

Chocolate bon-bons tempt us with a promise most luscious
Of something wonderfully, scrumptiously delicious.
With one bite of a bon-bon, the tongue is most welcoming
To creamy filling with a cherry in its own juice floating.
Ramadan is a confection –a numinous cherry
Dipped in the Scripture that commands such piety.
It is not until we taste it that we experience
Ramadan's surprise, a creamy center in its own bliss.

Bism'Allah.[9] *AlhamdulAllah.*[10]

O Allah, on this first day of Ramadan, be in my mind, in my body, and in my soul. Sustain me with your spiritual sustenance, and grant me strength, endurance, and peace of mind. Forgive me, purify me, and make my fasting acceptable to You.

Grant Your peace, grace, and mercy to all faithful Muslims engaging in this Ramadan adventure. As pleases You, inspire the Ummah[11] *to exemplify healthy lifestyles so we may reflect Your glory better.*

Subhan'Allah! [12] *Amen.*

[9] 'Bism'Allah' means 'In the name of God.' A Muslim is supposed to commit every act and thought to God. The simple act of getting out of bed in the morning is to be committed to God. To pronounce "Bism'Allah" over every deed, thought, or intention has been referred to as "naming."

[10] Most simply translated, 'AlhamdulAllah' is 'Praise God,' but it means that all praises, honor, and glory are reserved for God.

[11] The word 'ummah,' which is Aramaic as well as Arabic, was translated into 'ikklesia' in Greek and then to 'church' in English in the Christian New Testament. The Jewish Bible often translates it to 'nation.' In Islam, it means the 'faith community' and may refer to a local ummah or the global Ummah.

[12] 'Subhan'Allah' means 'Glory to God!'

Day 2

Assurance

When My servants ask you [Muhammed] about Me, I am indeed near. I listen to every prayer. May they also meditate and listen to Me and believe in Me so they may find proper direction.

On a night after fasting, you are permitted to be intimate with your spouses. Spouses are garments for one another.[13] Allah knows your past secret sins, but He has forgiven you, so now be intimate with your spouses, and seek what Allah has ordained for you [which is faithfulness in marriage].[14]

Eat and drink until the white thread of dawn [the band of morning light] appears distinct from its black thread [the awakening darkness], and then fast till night appears [at sunset], and do not associate with your spouses while you are in retreat in the mosques.

These are the regulations of Allah; do not break them. Allah clarifies His commands so people may fear and obey.

Inspired by Al Baqarah (The Heifer) 2: 186-187

Allah's Messenger (peace upon him) said, "Fasting is a shield [from Satan]. A fasting person should avoid intimacy with his [or her] spouse and should not behave foolishly and impudently. If someone argues with or is abusive to him [or her], he [or she] should say twice, 'I am observing the fast.'"

The Prophet (peace upon him) added, "By Him in whose hands my soul rests, the smell from the mouth of a fasting person is better to Allah than the smell of musk.

"[Allah explains], 'He [or she] has left his [or her] food, drink, and desires for My sake. The fast is for Me, so I will reward the fasting person because of it.'"[15]

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[13] The beautiful reference to spouses as garments means that each spouse covers the other with support, comfort, and encouragement. Spouses also protect one another from advances from strangers or others who would lead astray.

[14] The Prophet (peace!) told his followers that God would bless them for being intimate with their wives. They could not understand why sexual intimacy deserved to be rewarded. The Prophet explained, "If a man were to devote his passion to something forbidden [such as, the wife of another], then would that not be a sin? So, if he devoted his passion to something lawful, then he should have a reward" (Hadeeth: Muslim).

[15] Hadeeth: Bukhari: narrated by Abu Hurayra.

Allah, make the white thread of dawn, within the Qur'an,
Appear to my soul and help me rise to Your divine plan.
Like the sun that swims, in its own rays, in a forward stroke,
May I walk piously in my own life, not in darkness grope.
Enslave me to rules in this world of obscurities,
But free me to soar unfettered to numinous qualities.

Bism'Allah. AlhamdulAllah.

O Allah, on this second day of Ramadan, come closer to me, and bring me closer to You. Inscribe Your commands within my heart; write Your words upon my soul. Erase my sins, and cover their stains with Your grace.

Grant Your peace, grace, and mercy to every repentant sinner. As pleases You, inspire the Ummah to exemplify the lifestyle of Prophet Muhammed (peace and blessings upon him) so that non-Muslims may see the value of living the Islamic lifestyle.

Subhan'Allah! Amen.

Day 3

Devotion

Say, "Who is He who provides for you from the skies and the earth? Who is He who owns [the gifts of] hearing and sight? Who is He who brings forth the living from the dead and the dead from the living? Who is He who governs all activity?"

Someday everyone will answer, "The One God!"

Say, "Why then do you not fear and obey? That One is Allah, your true Lord. After truth, does anything remain but error? Why then are you adverse?"

Thus is the Word of your Lord proven true against those who rebel, but truly they will not believe.

Say, "From among your associates [the false gods], is there any who originates creation and then replicates it?" Say, "Allah [alone] originates creation and then replicates it. How can you be so contrary!"

Say, "From among your associates, is there any who guides to truth?" Say, "Allah [alone] guides to truth. Who is more worthy of being followed –the One who guides to truth, or the one who must first be guided himself before he can guide others? What is wrong with you and your way of figuring?"

Inspired by Yunus (Jonah) 10: 31-34

The Prophet (peace upon him) said, "Anyone who does not stop bearing false witness and pursuing such lies and other evil deeds has nothing to offer Allah by fasting from food and beverage." [16]

[16] Hadeeth: Bukhari: narrated by Abu Hurayra.

O Ramadan, steal me; let your dusky wings enfold me.
Permeate my mind, body, and soul with your light, softly.
Nourish me with morsels of divine, spiritual food.
Inspire me with whispered poetry of the right mood.
Drink me, and then give me Living Water to quench my thirst.
The One God is the Only God; feast my eyes on Him first.

Bism'Allah. AlhamduLAllah.

O Allah, on this third day of Ramadan, strengthen my abilities to hear truth and to see goodness. Count me not among the rebels, but plant me firmly among the righteous with whom You are pleased.

Grant Your peace, grace, and mercy to all those mentally challenged and handicapped people who do not have the intellectual capacity to understand Your truths. As pleases You, inspire the Ummah to establish day programs to enrich the lives of the mentally disabled.

Subhan'Allah! Amen.

Day 4

Excellence

Allah has bestowed from on high the most beautiful message in the form of a Book, consistent with itself and repetitious [for use as liturgy]. Upon hearing it, the skins of those who fear the Lord tremble, and then their skins and their hearts soften to the celebration of Allah's praises.[17] Such is the guidance of Allah. Therewith, He guides whom He pleases, but those whom Allah leaves astray have no guide.[18]

We [God as the Majestic Unity[19]] have presented for people, in this Qur'an, every kind of parable so they may reflect. The Qur'an is in Arabic. It contains no distortion so that people may fear and obey.

Allah presents this parable: A man serves many partners who are at odds with one another. Another man peacefully serves only one master. How do these two compare? Praise Allah! Most people, however, have no knowledge.

The one who delivers truth and confirms it [by a pious lifestyle] is among those who trust and obey. They shall find what they want with their Lord; such is the reward of the righteous.

Inspired by Al Zumar (The Crowds) 39: 23, 27-29, 33-34

Allah's Messenger (peace upon him) forbade uninterrupted fasting [ie, more than one day without nourishment]. [Some of his companions] said, "You yourself fast without a break."

At this, he said, "I am not like you. I am fed and nourished by Allah."[20]

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[17] When believers hear the Word of God, they get goose bumps, which melt away as the serenity of the words settles into the hearts and minds of those who embrace them.

[18] Is it fair that God chooses whom to guide? God has the amazing ability to see a person's whole life –past, present, future, and possible. He knows what he or she would do with every opportunity, whether realized or withheld. "If Allah had found any good in them, He certainly would have made them listen. If He had made them listen, however, they would only have turned away with rejection" (Surah 8: 23). Perhaps there is mercy in God's withholding guidance from those who would reject it, for certainly the punishment will not be as harsh for one who sinned for lack of guidance compared to one who was rightly guided and willfully chose disobedience. (See also n 37.)

[19] 'We' in reference to God is known as 'the Majestic We' and reflects the all-encompassing reality of God and all His awesome attributes.

[20] Hadeeth: Muslim: narrated by Ibn Umar.

Drops of mercy rain from above, and showers of grace.
Allah, nourish my soul as I seek Your secret place.
I empty myself of me and release all my turmoils.
Fill me with all that is You, O Lord of the Worlds.
Revive Your words of old to be fresh fruit You now give.
Let others see You when they look at the way I live.

Bism'Allah. AlhamdulAllah.

O Allah, on this fourth day of Ramadan, help me to confirm the truth by living a life pleasing to You. Dress me in robes of Qur'an so that my skin will not burn from Your wrath. Guide my feet with the lantern of Qur'an so that my path will not darken with iniquity.

Grant Your peace, grace, and mercy to those who, through no fault of their own, cannot read the Qur'an and cannot get an education and improve their lives. As pleases You, inspire the Ummah to volunteer in programs that teach reading and writing skills to those with learning disabilities.

Subhan'Allah! Amen.

Light

Allah is the light of Heaven and Earth.[21] The parable of His light is that of a niche within which is a lamp encased in glass glowing like a brilliant star. The lamp is filled with oil from an olive tree from neither east nor west [a universal tree], and the oil is so perfect that it is luminous even without the fire.

Light upon light! Allah guides whom He will to His light.

Allah sets forth such parables for the sake of Humanity, and Allah does have all knowledge.

Such light exists in houses that Allah has permitted to accrue honor because of the celebration within them of His name. In them, He is glorified mornings and evenings repeatedly.

Inspired by Al Noor (The Light) 24: 35-36

Aishah [the young wife of the Prophet] (may Allah be pleased) was asked about the special, late night prayer[22] of Allah's Messenger (peace upon him) during Ramadan. She answered, "The Messenger of Allah did not observe more than eleven rakats[23] of the late night prayer during Ramadan or any other month. He began with four rakats. You don't need to ask about their excellence and length![24] He continued with four more rakats. You don't need to ask about their excellence and length! After that, he observed three rakats."

Aishah continued, "I asked him, 'Messenger of Allah, do you sleep before observing the early morning prayer?'[25]

He answered, "O Aishah, my eyes sleep, but my heart does not."[26]

[21] The Arabic Qur'an does not differentiate between the planet 'Earth' (which is capitalized) and 'the earth' as land and things associated with land. My capitalization or lack of capitalization is merely my suggestion of meaning.

[22] This refers to the extra rakats, called 'Taraweeh,' that begin about one hour after 'Isha (the night prayer) during Ramadan. It is not mandatory, and some Muslims (ie, some Shi'a) do not practice it at all. Some Muslims perform twenty rakats at the mosque; others perform eight in congregation and twelve more at home.

[23] A 'rakat' is one repetition or segment of a prayer.

[24] She said this to emphasize that the rakats were perfect in excellence and length.

[25] The early morning prayer is called 'Witr' and is said anytime after midnight and before the morning prayer. It is not mandatory, but is recommended by all Muslims. The word 'witr' means 'odd numbered,' and the Witr contains any odd number of rakats.

[26] Hadeeth: Muslim: narrated by Abu Salamah bin Abdul Rahman. This reminds me of a lovely verse from the Jewish Bible: "I slept but my heart was awake, and in my dreams the Lover [of my soul] knocked at my [heart's] door" (Song of Solomon 5: 2).

Minarets stand like torches against brilliant azure.
Tongues flicker like flames, chanting words so pure.
Words of praise set worshipers' hearts aflame.
Wildfires of self are subdued and brought tame.

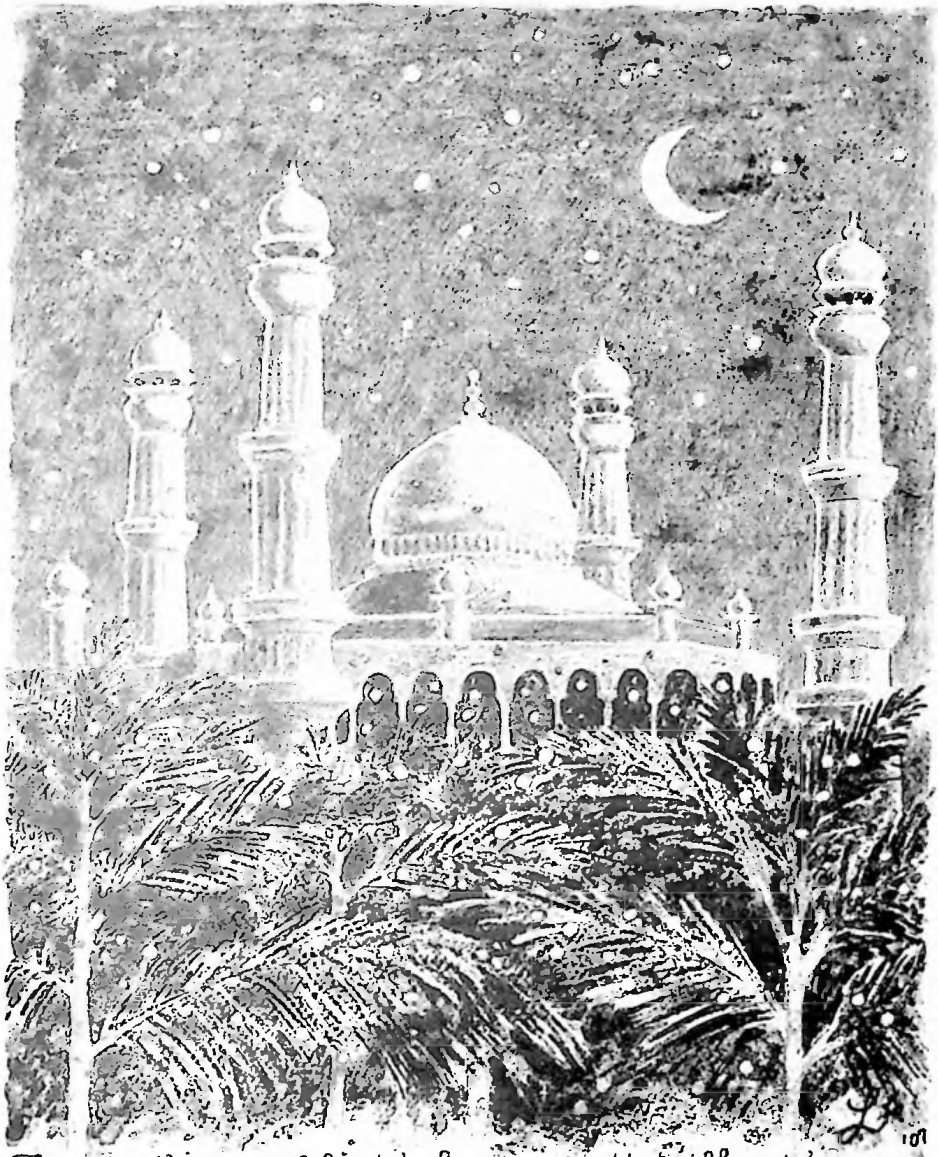
O Ramadan, you set my soul ablaze
As I seek His face in the sunset haze.

Bism'Allah. AlhamdulAllah.

O Allah, on this fifth day of Ramadan, purify me with Your divine light. May light emanate from my total being. Make my life as a lantern beckoning others to the Straight Way. Make me a light for the world so that I may contribute in positive ways to Your continuous creative activity.

Grant Your peace, grace, and mercy to those who must live with blindness and deafness. As pleases You, inspire the Ummah to create Islamic information accommodating the blind and deaf.

Subhan'Allah! Amen.



Minarets stand like torches against brilliant azure.

Comfort

Who listens to the distressed soul when it calls upon Him? Who relieves its suffering and makes you inheritors of the earth? A god besides God? Little you heed [if you think that].

Who guides you through the depths of darkness on land and sea? Who sends the winds as heralds of glad tidings ahead of His mercy [of rain]? A god besides God? Allah is far beyond whatever may be associated with Him.

Who originates creation, and then continues it? Who provides sustenance from Heaven and Earth? A god besides God? Say, "Produce your argument if you are telling the truth."

Say, "No one of Heaven or Earth, other than Allah, knows what is hidden, and neither can anyone else perceive when all shall be resurrected [from death]."

(The unbelievers) cannot comprehend the hereafter; they are in doubt and confusion and are [spiritually] blind.

They say, "When will this promise [of the end times] come to pass, if it's the truth?"

Say [to them], "It may be that some of the events you wish to hasten may already be in close pursuit of you."

Your Lord is full of grace for Humanity, although most people are ungrateful. Truly, your Lord knows all that their hearts conceal as well as all that they reveal.

Inspired by Al Naml (The Ants) 27: 62-66; 71-74

Allah's Prophet (peace upon him) said, "Anyone who prays every night the entire month of Ramadan, out of sincere faith and in hopes of a reward from Allah, will have all his [or her] previous sins forgiven."[27]

[27] Hadeeth: Bukhari: narrated by Abu Hurayra.

Neon signs that flicker and glare,
Against Allah's signs cannot compare.
His still, quiet voice ever gently calls
From soft moonbeams and crashing waterfalls.

"Allah! Allah!" my desperate soul shouts in pain.
"Hush, my child," He says. "I'm whispering your name."

Bism'Allah. AlhamdulAllah.

O Allah, on this sixth day of Ramadan, hear my prayers and calm the anguish of my soul. So many enemies stand against those of us who live our faith! Deliver us from evil, and break the knees of the wicked. Protect us from disaster, accident, diseases, and injuries; protect me and my family and my extended family members, my friends and e-pals, and all faithful believers.

Grant Your peace, grace, and mercy to all those suffering from trauma, tragedy, and affliction of all kinds. As pleases You, inspire the Ummah to design and support more programs to meet the needs of the afflicted and victimized.

Subhan'Allah! Amen.

Day 7

Order

We [God as the Majestic Unity] did not create the skies and Earth and all therein for idle sport! If We had simply wanted to take up a hobby, We would certainly have used things already in front of Us, if We would even do such a thing. Nonsense! We hurl truth against deception, thereby crushing deceit! Truly, deception perishes.

Beware, those of you who credit such fabrications [to God]. To Him belong all that is of Heaven and Earth. Even those who are directly in His presence are not too proud to serve Him, and they are never bored. They celebrate His praises night and day, without wavering.

If there were gods (of Heaven and Earth), besides Allah, there certainly would have been chaos! Praise Allah, Lord of the [Highest] Throne! He is above (the unbelievers') concoctions!

Do the unbelievers not realize that the skies and the earth were one mass, which We shattered? We created every living thing from water. Why don't they believe? We made the skies [the seven atmospheric layers] as a safety shield [from harmful rays and cosmic gasses]. Yet (the unbelievers) are heedless of such signs.

Inspired by Al Anbiya (The Prophets) 21: 16-20, 22, 30, 32

I [a follower] saw the Prophet (peace upon him) clean his teeth with a miswak,[28] *during his fasting, so many times I cannot give a count.*[29]

The Prophet (peace upon him) instructed, "Make a regular practice of miswak for it is truly the purification for the mouth and a means of pleasing the Lord."[30]

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[28] A 'miswak' is a natural toothbrush from the tree scientifically named 'Salvadora Persica.' The Prophet (peace!) taught his followers to clean their teeth with a twig from the tree, which contains an antibiotic that suppresses the growth of bacteria and formation of plaque in the mouth. Research suggests that regular use of the miswak reduces plaque, gingivitis, and cariogenic bacteria. Reportedly, the miswak contains amounts of fluoride, astringent, natural detergent, resin (coating the teeth), and a mild abrasive. Certainly, the Prophet (peace!) would approve modern toothbrushes and toothpaste just as well.

[29] Hadeeth: Bukhari: narrated by Amir Bin Rabia.

[30] Hadeeth: Bukhari: narrated by Aishah. Cleanliness is an important aspect of Islam.

The groans of our empty stomachs swallow and girth
The groans of the abused, raped, and polluted Earth.
All creation patiently awaits a heraldic dove,
As groans and agony spiral to Heaven above.
The prayers of the faithful join in celebration
Of Allah's promise of justice for all creation.

Bism'Allah. AlhamdulAllah.

O Allah, on this seventh day of Ramadan, forgive me for any contributions I have made to littering and polluting, and help me to become a better steward of the earth's resources. I dedicate myself as Your servant who protects and honors this beautiful planet.

Grant Your peace, grace, and mercy to those who live in devastated areas and slums and have little hope of being able to achieve better lives for themselves. As pleases You, inspire the Ummah to take more seriously the responsibility to preserve and protect nature and to improve living conditions in populated areas.

Subhan'Allah! Amen.

Day 8

Truth

Allah! No deity is there except Him, the Living, Independent, and Eternal One. Rest and sleep cannot appeal to Him. All things of the heavens and the earth are His. Who is there that can intercede in His presence except in accordance with His will? He understands situations past, present, and future, and no one grasps any of His knowledge except as He permits.

His throne extends over the skies and Earth, and He feels no fatigue in guarding and preserving them. He is the One Most High and Supreme.

Allow no coercion in religion. Truth is evident from error. Whoever rejects evil and idol worship and believes in Allah has grasped the most dependable grip that never breaks. And Allah hears and knows all.

Allah is the Protector of those who have faith. From the depths of darkness, He will guide them into light.

Those who reject faith are patrons of the false gods who divert from the light and lead into the depths of darkness. They will all be companions of the fire wherein they will abide forever.

The Messenger believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, as do the people of faith. Each one believes in Allah, His angels, His Scriptures, and His messengers.

"We do not differentiate among His Messengers," say (the believers). "We hear and we obey. Have mercy, our Lord, for to You is the journey's end."

Inspired by Al Baqarah (The Heifer) 2: 255-257, 285

Allah's Messenger (peace upon him) said, "For any servant of Allah who observes one day of fast for Allah's sake, Allah will remove his [or her] face from the fires of Hell a distance equivalent to seventy years."[31]

[31] Hadeeth: Muslim: narrated by Sa'id al Khudri.

The lion of hunger growls from our bellies a subtle hint,
Not only of those without adequate nourishment,
But also of those starving for spiritual food.
May we be living vessels offering bread that is good
And water that heals broken spirits and gives insight.
Feed the world hungering for truth and life and light.

Bism'Allah. AlhamdulAllah.

O Allah, on this eighth day of Ramadan, bless my sleep so that even in my dreams I will remember You. Forgive me for any evil thoughts I harbor, and help me to dispel any negative energies haunting me. May positive energies emanate from me and be absorbed by people, creatures, and things around me, so that positive energies will be reflected upon me.

Grant Your peace, grace, and mercy to those struggling with the negative influences and effects of alcohol, tobacco, and harmful drugs. As pleases You, inspire the Ummah to build Islamic rehabilitation centers where learning to say "no" provides convictions to which to say "yes."

Subhan'Allah. Amen.

Forgiveness

Satan whispered evil to him, saying, "O Adam, shall I lead you to the Tree of Eternal Life and to an everlasting kingdom?"

As a result, they both [Adam and Eve] ate of the tree, and then their bodies became visible to them [after they lost the numinous clothing of pure light]. They began to fashion together leaves from Paradise in order to cover themselves. In this way, Adam disobeyed His Lord and allowed himself to be beguiled.

His Lord chose him, however, and He responded to him and gave him guidance.

(Allah) said, "All of you [all Humanity], descend [from this perfect dimension] with animosity among you. But there will certainly be guidance from Me, and whoever follows My guidance will not lose the way or fall into despair."

O Believers, surrender your whole selves to Allah, and do not follow the guidance of the Evil One, who is an avowed enemy to you. If you regress after the evidence has appeared to you, keep in mind that Allah is Exalted in Majesty and Wisdom.[32]

Inspired by Ta Ha (T H) 20: 120-123;
and Al Baqarah (The Heifer) 2: 208-209

The Prophet (peace upon him) said, "There is a gate to Paradise called 'Ar Raiyan.' Those who fast will enter that gate on the Day of Resurrection, and only they will enter through that gate.

"They will come forward, and no one except them will enter through that gate, which will afterwards be closed to everyone else."[33]

[32] Regardless of what a person does, nothing can be added to or deducted from the majesty of Allah (blessed and exalted is He), and He is able to forgive or punish.

[33] Hadeeth: Bukhari: narrated by Sahl.

What a delight to finally taste food and drink
When, at the end of a Ramadan day, we sink!
It is a subtle sign of the delights that all our senses
Will enjoy when this temporal life finally vanishes.
In this life, we are fasting from our true nature
And from our eternal home, original and pure.

Bism'Allah. AlhamdulAllah.

O Allah, on this ninth day of Ramadan, strengthen my resolve and help me win against evil temptations. Thank you for Your divine gifts of guidance, repentance, and forgiveness. I pray that You magnify these strengths in others who are faithful to You. Help us believers to remain firm and never become complacent in the jihad[34] *against all the evil that surrounds us.*

Grant Your peace, grace, and mercy to all children victimized by physical and sexual abuse. As pleases You, inspire the Ummah to become involved in rescue operations, counseling services, and preventive measures related to child abuse.

Subhan'Allah! Amen.

[34] In this case, 'jihad' refers to the spiritual struggle. The lesser jihad is physical conflict, which is allowed in Islam in cases of oppression and the need for self-defense.

Day 10

Glory

May whatever is of Heaven and Earth glorify Allah, for He is the Majestic and Most Wise! To Him belongs the dominion of Heaven and Earth. It is He who gives life and death, and He has power over all things. He is the First and the Last, the Evident and the Obscure, and He is omniscient.

It is He who has created the skies and Earth in six days[35] and is ultimately established on the throne. He knows what penetrates the earth and what emerges from it, and what falls from the sky and what mounts up to it. And He is with you wherever you may be, and Allah observes all that you do.

To Him belongs the dominion of the skies and Earth, and all affairs are referred back to Allah. He merges night into day, and day into night, and He has full knowledge of the secrets of hearts.

He is the One who sends Scripture to His servant [the Prophet] so that He may lead you from the depths of darkness into light. Truly, for you, Allah is the Most Kind and Merciful.

O Humanity, guidance has come to you from your Lord. It is a cure for aching hearts. It grants guidance and mercy to believers.

Inspired by Al Hadeed (The Iron) 57: 1-6, 9;
and Yunus (Jonah) 10: 57

Allah's Messenger (peace upon him) said, "The people will remain going the right way when they don't delay breaking their fast."[36]

[35] Before the world was created and set in order, a linear day, as we understand it, did not exist. A creation day, then, is a stage consisting of an indefinite amount of time and space.

[36] Hadeeth: Bukhari: narrated by Sahl bin Sa'd. One of the courtesies of fasting is that one joyfully and readily breaks the fast and gratefully enjoys the sustenance Allah provides.

The hunger and thirst we feel during Ramadan's fast
Reminds us of how dependent we really are at last.
We are dependent upon water gently descending
From a laden sky far above, generously lending,
Or water gaily bubbling from the dirt beneath our feet.
We are dependent upon the tiny seeds, scattered,
Their communion with the sky and dirt, and then shattered
To release tiny sprouts to grow and blossom and produce
Fibers for clothes, vegetables for food, and fruit for juice.
And yet, nothing of the sky or the earth is competent
To create without the power of Allah the Omnipotent.

Bism'Allah. AlhamdulAllah.

O Allah, on this tenth day of Ramadan, I thank You for all the wonderful flavors of fruits and vegetables, and I ask Your blessings on the farmers. Help them as they work to establish a relationship with the good earth.

Bless the forests, fields, and mountains and ease the affliction they suffer from Humanity's lust for nature's wealth. Save them from destruction and extinction. Use my voice to advocate for the responsible use of natural resources.

Grant Your peace, grace, and mercy on those who are struggling to survive and don't have enough to eat, and on those who have just lost their jobs. As pleases You, inspire the Ummah to provide self-help training programs so that people may learn to uncover opportunities in their challenges.

Subhan'Allah. Amen.

Day 11

Balance

Your Lord is Allah who created the skies and Earth in six days, and then established Himself on the [Heavenly] throne. He draws the night as a curtain over the day. In haste, one consecutively seeks the other [as day seeks to open the curtain again]. He created the sun, the moon, and the stars, which are governed by laws under His command. Isn't it up to Him to create and govern? Blessed be Allah, Lord of All the Worlds!

Call upon your Lord with humility and in privacy, for Allah does not love[37] those who transgress.

Commit no pandemonium on Earth now that it has been set in order [according to the perfect balance of nature], but address Allah in reverence and sincerity, for the mercy of Allah is always near to those who live righteously.

It is He who sends the winds like heralds of the good news of His mercy until [finally] (His mercy) raises packed clouds. We [God as the Majestic Unity] forward (Our mercy) to a desiccated land, and then We bestow (Our mercy) as rain, from which We produce all the fruits. Likewise, We resurrect the dead. Perhaps you will remember.

Inspired by Al Araf (The Heights) 7: 54-57

Allah's Messenger (peace upon him) said, "Enjoy the morning meal before dawn, for in the morning meal[38] *is a blessing."*[39]

[37] As Kabbalism has noted, "God is a verb," so when God does not love, He emits an action rather than a passion. The Qur'an explains, "As for he who...follows a path other than that of the believers, We shall leave him to that which he has chosen for himself" (Surah 4: 115); "...Allah has disowned them because of their guilt" (Surah 4: 88); "...Allah does not guide people who refuse to acknowledge the truth" (Surah 5: 67). In these ayats (verses), we see abandonment, disownment, and lack of guidance –which are truly a taste of Hell. The unrepentant sinner, however, has made a decision to leave God out of his or her life and has chosen a life void of God's love, guardianship, and guidance.

[38] The pre-dawn meal is called 'suhur.'

[39] Hadeeth: Muslim: narrated by Anas. Nutritionists claim that the most important meal of the day is the morning meal to boost one's energy at the start of the day. While one is fasting during the day, the morning meal is even more important in keeping the body from going into survival mode by building fat cells and storing calories.

As we fast, let's remember that all creation
Is fasting from its original perfection.
We are commanded to commit no pandemonium,
But nature continues to suffer an evil syndrome
From rape of forests, pollution of rivers, lakes, and land,
Lusty slaughter of wildlife, and disgrace of seas and sand.
As we break our fast, we should commit our hands
To acts of repair and improvement to waters and lands.
After all, nature needs a sunset from its fast too.
To ignore such a need would show ingratitude.

Bism'Allah. AlhamdulAllah.

O Allah, on this eleventh day of Ramadan, I ask for Your mercy on the animals. Ease the suffering of wild animals who struggle for survival in a damaged eco-system, pets and farm animals who suffer cruel treatment and neglect, and food animals who are raised and slaughtered in inhumane ways. Help me to make others aware of the injustices done to animals and how we humans must become responsible enough to make the planet a healthy home for all.

Grant Your peace, grace, and mercy on all Your creatures of the forests, fields, and burrows, of ranches, farms, and households, of oceans, lakes, and rivers, and of the sky, and on the people who love them and work to protect them. As pleases You, inspire the Ummah to share Islam's message of Humanity's responsibility to reflect Your love and compassion for all life.

Subhan'Allah! Amen.

Day 12

Grace

It is He who commands rain from the sky; from it you drink, and because of it exists vegetation for your grazing pastures. With it, He produces for you corn, olives, date palms, grapes, and every other kind of fruit. Herein is a sign for people who ponder.

He specifically designed the night and the day for you. The sun and moon and stars are controlled at His command. Herein are signs for people with wisdom.

Things on this earth has He multiplied in various hues. Herein is a sign for people who remember.

It is He who specifically designed the ocean for you so that you may eat from it tender meat. You may also pull from (the ocean) an ornament to wear. You watch ships tearing across it, and you hope for His grace [in safe and rewarding exporting and importing]. Perhaps you are thankful?

He has cast the mountains to stand firmly on the earth so that they will not be unsteady with you. There are also rivers and roads so you may guide yourself, and there are landmarks and stars for navigation.

Is He who creates comparable to one who cannot create? Will you not think about that?

If you tried to count all the blessings from Allah, you could never count them all. Allah is the Most Forgiving and the Most Merciful.

Inspired by Al Nahl (The Bees) 16: 10-18

Allah's Messenger (peace upon him) said, "If someone forgets that he is fasting and eats or drinks, he [or she] should continue fasting [as if there had been no break], because Allah [by His will] is the reason he [or she] was nourished." [40]

[40] Hadeeth: Muslim: narrated by Abu Hurayra.

Sparkling, iced tea on a hot afternoon is comforting.
Steaming, hot oatmeal takes the chill off a brisk morning.
Dark chocolate gives courage on a nerve-wrecked day.
Coffee hugs a person from the inside and eases life's way.

O Ramadan, alarm us of hungering, thirsting souls
And inspire us to include their welfare in our goals.
We must offer bread to those weak in spiritual strife.
We must serve milk to those faint from struggles of life.
From our kind acts of mercy, ministry, and charity,
The Provider of Sustenance and Grace others may see.

Bism'Allah. AlhamdulAllah.

O Allah, on this twelfth day of Ramadan, I praise You for rain and sunshine. Thank You for all the blessings You bestow upon the earth every day and every night. May the whole world know of Your awesome deeds, and honor You by wearing beautiful ornaments of praise on lips sweetened by sincere prayers. Help me to never take Your blessings for granted.

Grant Your peace, grace, and mercy on humans and creatures who don't have access to clean, safe water. As pleases You, inspire the Ummah to provide bottled water, water-purifying straws and additives, wells, and reservoirs for people in need, and to work toward purifying and preserving water resources for wild animals.

Subhan'Allah! Amen.

Day 13

Maturity

Do you consider what you plant? Do you cause (the seed) to sprout, or do We? If it were Our intention, we could crumble it, and you would be left bewildered, complaining, "We are left in debt; indeed we are at a loss."

Do you consider the water you drink? Do you entice it from the clouds, or do We? If it were Our intention, We could make it salty and bitter. Why then do you not give thanks?

Do you consider the fire you kindle? Do you grow its trees [from which the fire is fed], or do We? We have made it a reminder [of Our gifts] and a thing of comfort for campers in the wilderness.[41]

Then celebrate with praises the Name of your Lord the Supreme Being!

Isn't it time for the believers to humbly engage their minds in remembering Allah and the revealed truth? They should not become like those who were given the Book [of Scriptures] previously, and then, after a prolonged wait [for the Messianic Age], became hard headed. Many among them are rebellious.

Realize that Allah revives the earth after it has succumbed [to winter]. We have explained such signs. Perhaps you will understand.

You must realize that the life of this world is only recreation and amusement, pageantry and common bragging, and trying to outdo one another in wealth and children.

Consider this simile: Rain and the growth it causes delight the farmers, but soon the growth withers, turns yellow, becomes dry, and then crumbles.

In the next life, expect either severe punishment or forgiveness and favor from Allah. This world is mere illusion.

Inspired by Al Waqiah (The Inevitable) 56: 63-74;
and Al Hadeed (The Iron) 57: 16-17, 20

The Prophet (peace upon him) said, "If one of you is invited to a meal during the fast, inform the host, 'I am fasting.'"[42]

[41] Herein is a sign for those seeking spiritual light and comfort. God not only provides the wood for the fire that warms our bodies, but He also provides the fuel of His guidance to warm our souls. It is up to each person, however, whether to maintain the fire or to snuff it.

[42] Hadeeth: Muslim: narrated by Abu Hurayra. This instruction shows that one should use the invitation as an opportunity to witness about Islam. If one simply turned down the invitation or made an excuse, the opportunity would be wasted

Imagine a dense vine appearing as a sturdy thing
Because of a boulder to which the tendrils cling.
Without the rock's grand support, the vine would be left
To ramble in dirt and grasp things no greater than itself.
Because the vine so densely and luxuriously grew,
The rock on which it has grown is hidden from view.

Now imagine the vine deprived of water and nutrients.
Its leaves fall limp and begin to wither; the vine shrinks.
As the vine recedes in its weakened situation,
You begin to see the rock and its beautiful delineation,
Ribbons of quartz and jasper, spatters of mica and gold,
And intricate crevices that floral tendrils once did hold.

This is a simile of the faithful Muslim during Ramadan.
During our hunger and thirst, we shrink from vision
So that others may see the Rock that gives us figure.
Allah is our Rock, our Support, and our Sustainer.
Without Him, we would, like the vine, be destined to roam
And depend on things no greater than strengths our own.

Bism'Allah. AlhamdulAllah.

O Allah, on this thirteenth day of Ramadan, I thank You for the daily blessings that make my life comfortable and pleasant. I ask You to make me wealthy enough to be able to help those in need, poor enough to realize their needs, and stable enough to always be generous.

Grant Your peace, grace, and mercy on those who do not have adequate shelter and living facilities. As pleases You, inspire the Ummah to support projects that provide homes and other necessities for those in need.

Subhan'Allah! Amen.

Day 14

Trust

In all creation –in the skies and the earth, in the alternation of night and day, in the ships crossing the ocean for the benefit of Humanity, in the rain Allah sends from the sky and the life it awakens from a silent earth, in the multitudes of creatures Allah has dispersed, in the changing winds, and in the clouds trailing the wind like servants of the sky and the earth— are signs for rational people.

Yet there are people who revere others, besides Allah, as equal. They love (their idols) as they should love Allah. But those of faith are overflowing in their love for Allah. If only the unrighteous would understand, they would envision the punishment and realize that Allah secures all power, and Allah will intensely enforce the punishment.

Among people is [the example of] one who voluntarily gives his [or her] life in the hope of Allah's acceptance. And Allah is merciful to [His] servants.

For anyone who performs any deed of righteousness and has faith,[43] his [or her] endeavor will not be denied. We shall record it in his [or her] favor.

Inspired by Al Baqarah (The Heifer) 2: 164-165, 207; and Al Anbiya (The Prophets) 21: 94

Allah's Messenger (peace upon him) said, "If someone dies without fulfilling all the fasting days of Ramadan, his [or her] survivors should observe a fast on the deceased person's behalf." [44]

[43] There is a stipulation here that a righteous deed must be accompanied by faith. Someone who denies the existence of God or refuses to submit to Him is not guaranteed that his or her good deeds will earn salvation.

[44] Hadeeth: Bukhari: narrated by Aishah.

Ramadan strengthens and prepares us to endure
Whatever struggles and trials await us in the future.
When we hold onto our Rock during grief and troubles,
The attributes of our Rock are revealed to others.
Our dedicated lives should conform in such a way
That each is a sign pointing others to the Straight Way.
But it is in our weaknesses that Allah's elements
Of strength and endurance are most in evidence.

Bism'Allah. AlhamdulAllah.

O Allah, on this fourteenth day of Ramadan, I ask for courage and perseverance. Help me to be an encouragement to others. Have mercy on those who are weak and help them find the strength they need to face whatever difficulties confront them in this life of struggle. Deliver Your faithful servants from tragedy and evil.

Grant Your peace, grace, and mercy on citizens living under oppressive regimes and on honest, moral government leaders as they face difficult decisions. As pleases You, inspire the Ummah to discover ways to defend and rescue victims of political injustices.

Subhan'Allah! Amen.

Da 15

Responsibility

Say, "Call upon that which you adore above Allah [ie, glamour, wealth, and fame], and you will find that they have no power –even to equal the weight of an atom— in outer space or on Earth. They possess no share thereof, and none of them assists Allah.

"No intercession can avail in His presence except for those to whom He has granted permission. It is such that when terror [of His presence] is removed from their hearts, they will be asked, 'What did your Lord command?' and they will answer, 'That which is true and just, and He is the Highest and the Greatest.'"

Say, "Who gives sustenance from the skies and the earth?" Say, "It is Allah! Are you [unbelievers] under right guidance and we [believers] in manifest error, or vice versa?"

Say, "You shall not be questioned about our sins, and we shall not be questioned about yours."

Say, "Our Lord will assemble us together and will ultimately decide [all matters] among us concerning truth [and justice], and He is the Final Judge and the Ultimate Mind."

Say, "Truly my Lord increases the provision to whomever He pleases. He is fully capable, although most people do not realize it."

Inspired by Saba (Sheba) 34: 22-26, 36

I came to Abu Sa'id al Khudri, and he was surrounded. When the people dispersed, I said to him, "I am not going to ask you about what these people were discussing; I am here to ask you about fasting on a journey."

Upon this, he told me, "We traveled with Allah's Messenger (peace upon him) towards Meccah, and we had been fasting. We came to a halt, and at that place, the Messenger said, 'You are nearing your enemy, and breaking your fast now would give you greater strength.' That was a concession for us, but some of us continued to observe the fast, and some of us broke it. Later, we came to another place, and the Messenger said, 'You are going to encounter the enemy in the morning. Breaking fast now would give you strength, so break the fast.' As it was a matter of stress, we broke the fast. Later, however, we found ourselves [again] observing the fast on a journey with Allah's Messenger (peace upon him)."[45]

[45] Hadeeth: Muslim: narrated by Qaza'a.

When the new moon began as a delicate, faint sliver
Floating over the horizon with a soft shimmer,
We began to empty ourselves of self-centered feelings,
Bland notions, secular desires, and vain wanderings.

Now Ramadan is half fulfilled, the moon full again.
You have emptied yourself each day of something vain.
Your ego has filled an imaginary, moon-shaped vase.
Now offer it to Allah and ask for His saving grace.

As you see the full moon empty itself some every day,
Look inside yourself and notice the change as you pray.
Allah purifies what you offer Him of your strife
And pours back into your soul a cleansed, grace-filled life.

Bism'Allah. AlhamdulAllah.

O Allah, on this fifteenth day of Ramadan, I call on You to fill the vessel of my life with kindness, compassion, and understanding. Remind me every day of those who struggle from birth defects, debilitating ailments and injuries, terminal illnesses, mental and physical disabilities, and enslaving situations. Make me an active participant in Your divine rescue operations.

Grant Your peace, grace, and mercy on all those living with pain. As pleases You, inspire the Ummah to support medical research and to raise funds to provide medical care for those who cannot afford it.

Subhan'Allah! Amen.

Day 16

Righteousness

Who is better in speech than one who invites others to Allah, performs righteousness, and says, "I am among those who submit [to Allah]"?

Righteousness and evil cannot be equal. Repel [evil] with what is better, and then you may make an intimate friend of one with whom there was hatred. (Such harmony) will be granted to no one except those who exercise patience.[46] Such are people of the best, proper success.

If a provocation to discord is made to you by the Evil One, seek refuge in Allah. He is the One Who Hears and Knows All.

Certainly, those who distort Our signs are not hidden from Us. Which is better –the one discarded into the Fire or the one who is saved on the Day of Resurrection? Do whatever you want, but (Allah) will certainly know what you do.

Whoever performs righteousness benefits his [or her] own soul. Whoever performs evil disgraces his [or her] own soul. Your Lord is not unjust to the worshippers.

Inspired by Fussilat (Expounded) 41: 33-36, 40, 46

We [followers] went out on an expedition with Allah's Messenger (peace upon him) during Ramadan. Some of us fasted, and some of us broke fast. The ones who observed fast did not find fault with the ones who broke it, and the ones who broke fast did not find fault with the ones who kept it.[47]

[46] For peaceful relations, the buzzword of today is 'tolerance,' but tolerance is not the opposite of intolerance as both are based on negative value judgments. The Qur'an gives the best advice, which is patience, which includes appropriate responses tempered with understanding and self-restraint.

[47] Hadeeth: Muslim: narrated by Abu Sa'id al Khudri. In this community sunnah, we find an important lesson about not judging those who make a different decision. Islam is a community religion, but it is also very personal. One must be free to make choices based on one's own conscience and individual circumstances.

Ramadan has taken us for redecoration.
It scrapes our tongues of harsh words carelessly spoken.
Ramadan adjusts our ears to tune out distractions.
It sweeps our hearts of harbored grudges and ill intentions
And scrubs our minds of worthless thoughts and fabrications.
Ramadan will change us and improve our holiness.
Even old enemies may find new friends among us.

Bism'Allah. AlhamdulAllah.

O Allah, on this sixteenth day of Ramadan, purify me and put beautiful words on my tongue, divine melodies in my ears, and blossoming flowers in the gardens of my mind. Give me opportunities to witness and the wisdom to handle those opportunities gracefully and successfully.

Grant Your peace, grace, and mercy on our honorable, faithful, spiritual leaders. As pleases You, inspire the Ummah to develop programs that may awaken the individual, leadership qualities of each believer.

Subhan'Allah! Amen.

Faith

Will you reflect whether [the story of] the companions of the cave and the inscription [later marking the cave] were wonders among Our Signs?[48]

The [Christian] youths [of Ephesus] settled in a cave. They said, "Our Lord, bestow upon us Your mercy and dispose of our affair [of religious persecution] in the best way."

We numbed their ears for a number of years in the cave. Later We roused them [by the collapse of a wall concealing the cave] in order to challenge which one of them was best at figuring how long they had tarried [in the cave].

We relate to you their story as a matter of truth. These were [Christian] youths who believed in their Lord, and We multiplied guidance to them.

They [the subsequent community] inhabited the cave three hundred and nine years.

Inspired by Al Kahf (The Cave) 18: 9-13, 25

A man came running to Allah's Messenger (peace upon him). "O Messenger of Allah, I am ruined!"

The Prophet asked, "What has caused your downfall?"

The man confessed, "I had sex with my wife when I was supposed to be fasting."

Hearing this, the Prophet asked, "Can you set a slave free?"

"No," he said.

The Prophet asked, "Can you fast for two consecutive months?"

"No, I can't do that," the man said.

The Prophet asked, "Can you provide food for sixty poor people?"

"No," said the man, and he sat down to think.

Meanwhile, someone brought a basket of dates for the Prophet (peace upon him).

[48] According to researchers, the oldest known version of this story has been found in a Syriac manuscript written by Jacob of Saruq (b 452 CE), a Christian priest of Syria. The story is best known from Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Chapter 33. Seven youths began an enclave that hid from the soldiers of Emperor Decius who reigned 249-251 CE. The community of cave dwellers was, in a sense, 'dead to the world' as they lived in absolute seclusion for 309 years.

The Prophet handed the basket to the man and said, "Here. Take these dates and give them in charity [for atonement]."

The man said, "You mean give them to someone poorer than me? There is no family poorer than mine between the two lava plains of Medina!"

The Prophet smiled, and his molars were showing! Finally, he said, "Okay, go give the dates to your own family."[49]

Ramadan is a cave wherein we escape for awhile
From our busy lives of struggle that tends to rile.
Plugged with piety, our ears may get a vacation
From the vile taunts of religious persecution.
While we strive to be more attuned to Allah's guidance,
We avoid distractions and seek what will enhance.
Allah will soon rouse us from sheltering Ramadan.
O Ramadan, how your precious time is so quickly gone!

Bism'Allah. AlhamdulAllah.

O Allah, on this seventeenth day of Ramadan, calm my spirit and ease my mind. Relax me and refresh me so I may awaken energized and ready to do Your will. Let me rest in the shelter of Your grace, and prepare me for the spiritual adventures that You have written for me.

Grant Your peace, grace, and mercy on those whose lives are so turbulent and stressful that they feel drained of energy. As pleases You, inspire the Ummah to take initiative to help others who are overburdened.

Subhan'Allah! Amen.

[49] Hadeeth: Muslim: narrated by Abu Hurayra. What a terrific story showing that humor and laughter are compatible with the seriousness of piety!

Courage

We gave courage to their hearts [after the cave-dwellers realized that their Christian community had accepted the worship of the gods of the Roman Empire]. They took a stand and said, "Our Lord is the Lord of Heaven and Earth. Never shall we call upon any god other than Him. If we did, we would indeed have uttered a big lie!

"Some among our people have acknowledged gods other than Him. Why do they not produce convincing evidence [of their gods]? Who sins greater than one who fabricates slander against Allah?

"When you turn away from (the Roman persecutors) and the things they worship other than Allah, settle yourselves in the cave [to live in seclusion], and Your Lord will shower His mercies on you and accommodate you in your situation." [Thus began the community.]

[If you had been there] you could have watched the sun rise and climb from the right and the sun decline and set on the left [without your ever suspecting that the cave was inhabited] while they [the inhabitants] lay in the spacious midst of the cave.

Such as this is among the Signs of Allah. The one guided by Allah is properly guided, but the one Allah leaves astray will find no guardian to lead him [or her] to the proper way.

Inspired by Al Kahf (The Cave) 18: 14-17

Aishah said, "Allah's Messenger (peace upon him) kissed one of his wives while he was fasting." [She did not say which wife, but] Aishah was grinning when she told us this.[50]

[50] Hadeeth: Muslim. Isn't this cute! I had to giggle. This hadeeth shows that affection alone does not break one's fast!

When we leave the cave of Ramadan's adventure,
The world may seem crazier than we remember.
In reality, it will be we who have changed.
By Allah's grace, to worldly passions we are estranged.

We must invite lost and confused souls to escape
From a seductive, wretched world that seals their fate.
Invite them to come and bring every hurt and flaw
Unto the loving and forgiving mercy of Allah.

Bism'Allah. AlhamdulAllah.

O Allah, on this eighteenth day of Ramadan, I ask for You to protect police officers who risk their lives to protect good citizens from criminals and from hot-heads who react violently. I ask the same for soldiers who have the sincere desire to serve their country in honorable and patriotic ways, and I ask that they not be put in the precarious position of having to decide whether to follow an immoral order or risk court martial for doing the right thing.

Grant Your peace, grace, and mercy on all those dedicated to honorable service to Humanity. As pleases You, inspire the Ummah to join and support service oriented occupations and volunteer programs.

Subhan'Allah! Amen.

Hope

You would have thought them aware, although they were in a deep sleep, and We turned them right and left on their sides.[51]

Their dog lay at the opening of the cave, with his forelegs stretched out. If you had happened upon them, you would have turned around and ran, out of fear [of the threatening dog].[52]

Further, we aroused (the cave-dwellers) so they might question one another.

One asked, "How long have you stayed?"

Some said, "We have stayed a day or so."

They said, "Allah alone knows how long you have stayed."

Another said, "Have one of us go, with this money of yours, into town. Have him find the most suitable food and get some for you to satisfy your hunger. Tell him to behave cautiously and courteously and not to inform anyone about you. If they [the oppressors] discover you, they would stone you or force you to return to their [pagan] cult. In that case, you would never attain prosperity."

[The chosen member went in his old-fashioned clothes and presented coins of the then-fallen Roman Empire.[53]] In this way, We made their situation known to the people [the new generation for which monotheistic Christianity was then the state-sponsored religion] so that they might know that the promise of Allah is true and that there can be no doubt about the Hour of Judgment.[54] ....

Inspired by Al Kahf (The Cave) 18: 18-21

[51] If understood literally, the sleepers were turned to prevent bedsores. Uncovering metaphorical meanings, however, does not invalidate the literal one and may lead to deeper understanding. I suggest that, if the story is interpreted symbolically, the act refers to mental stimulation so that the people would not become eccentric. We may find a lesson here that Islamic theology should not become stagnant but must remain flexible in order to accommodate the needs of our ever-changing, global society.

[52] Traditionally, the dog was known as 'Qitmir.' The watchful dog may remind us of a guardian angel protecting our subconscious minds from evil influences during times when we are mentally lackadaisical.

[53] When the companion tried to pay for bread with an obsolete coin bearing the image of then-deceased Emperor Decius, the shopkeeper suspected that the young man had robbed someone's treasure. The commotion got the attention of the city's chief officer. The officer investigated and, after following the young man back to the cave, discovered the community that belonged to the period of Emperor Decius.

[54] It has been reported that an emperor, Theodosis 2, reigning previously to the cave-dwellers' reappearance, had prayed for God to send a sign that would restore, to doubting minds, the belief of life after death. The cave community's blast from the past was the sign that was needed to revive belief in the Day of Resurrection.

Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah upon him) used to encourage people to watch the night in prayer during Ramadan, but he never ordered it definitely.

He used to say, "Whoever watches the night in prayer during Ramadan, with trust and expectation, will be forgiven for all past sins."

Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah upon him) died while it was customary [to watch the night in prayer during Ramadan], and it continued to be the custom during the Khalifate of Abu Bakr and at the beginning of the Khalifate of Umar ibn al Khattab.[55]

O Ramadan, steal us from our defiled surroundings.
O Allah, we seek refuge from depraved whisperings.

In Ramadan, by Allah's will, we forget time and space
Without losing our footing in the temporal place.
Our spirits are secluded in the cave of Ramadan.
Will we be recognized on return to our regular zone?
Surely, others should see in us a transformation.
Surely, our faith will contrast the world's situation.

Bism'Allah. AlhamdulAllah.

O Allah, on this nineteenth day of Ramadan, I pray for protection within my home and within the homes of all faithful believers and innocent children. Bless the fire fighters and emergency rescue and medical crews who are always prepared and ready to come to the aid of anyone in peril.

Grant Your peace, grace, and mercy to victims and survivors of fires, accidents, and medical traumas. As pleases You, inspire the Ummah to donate smoke and carbon monoxide detectors to those who cannot afford them.

Subhan'Allah! Amen.

[55] Hadeeth: Malik's Muwatta: narrated by Yahya, who heard it from Malik, who heard it from Ibn Shihab, who heard it from Abu Salama ibn Abd al Rahman ibn Awf, who heard it from Abu Hurayra.

O Allah, we seek refuge
from depraved whisperings.

Day 20

Integrity

.... They [of the town's Christian community] discussed among themselves concerning the account of (the cave-dwellers).

Some said, "Let's build a monument to them."

Their Lord knows best concerning them, and those who won the debate said, "Let us build a house of worship in honor of them."

Some people say there were three [original youths], and that the dog made a fourth. Others say there were five and the dog made six, but they were only guessing. Still others say there were seven and the dog made eight.

Say, "My Lord knows best their number. Only a few people know the whole story. Don't argue about controversial matters unless there is a definitive end, and don't bother investigating concerning (the sleepers)." [The details aren't important; it's the moral.]

[The moral of the story is:] Don't say of anything, "I will do such-and-such tomorrow," without adding, "if Allah so wills" [because, as the sleepers found, your world may be changed tomorrow], and call your Lord to mind if you do forget, and then say, "I hope that my Lord will guide me ever closer than this to the correct avenue."

Inspired by Al Kahf (The Cave) 18: 21-24

We [followers] practiced seclusion in the mosque in the middle third of Ramadan with the Prophet (peace upon him). In the morning of Ramadan the twentieth, the Prophet came and addressed us, saying, "I was shown the date of the Night of Power, but then I was caused to forget it, so look for it on the odd numbered nights of the last ten nights of the month of Ramadan."[56]

[56] Hadeeth: Bukhari: narrated by Abu Sa'id. The Night of Power is the anniversary of the beginning of the revelation of the Qur'an.

We feel blessed in this spiritual enclave,
In the seclusion of our Ramadan cave.
When we re-enter our ordinary elements,
Shall we vow to end trivial arguments?
What value are the points with no definitive end?

Our shifting world may change tomorrow, and then
We would have to re-argue every silly case,
And endure unyielding assumptions with no base.
Insh'Allah, each person will walk with Allah so closely
That he or she can make the best decisions wisely.

Bism'Allah. AlhamdulAllah.

O Allah, on this twentieth day of Ramadan, I think of the elderly and the experiences of their long lives. Make the end of their days comfortable and without worry. Wherever they are, may their homes be truly houses of worship as those around them build monuments of respect, kindness, and tender, loving care. Bless and guide compassionate research scientists trying to find cures for Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and other progressive diseases.

Grant Your peace, grace, and mercy on the elderly and comfort them in their old age. As pleases You, inspire the Ummah to volunteer with organizations providing services to the elderly.

Subhan'Allah! Amen.

Day 21

Honor

Abraham said to his father Azar, "Do you acknowledge idols for gods? I see you and your people in obvious error."

We [God as the Majestic Unity] showed Abraham the laws of the skies and Earth so he may have assurance.

When the night enveloped him, he saw a star and said, "This is my Lord." But when it set, he said, "I cannot love something that sets."

When he saw the moon rise [in its splendor], he said, "This is my Lord." But when the moon set, he said, "Unless my Lord guides me, I shall surely be among those who are lost."

When he saw the sun rise [in its splendor], he said, "This is my Lord; this is the most awesome of all." But when the sun set, he said, "O my people, I reject your assigning partners [to Allah]. As for me, I have set my face in submission towards Him who created the skies and Earth, and I will never assign partners [to Allah]."

Anyone –male or female— who performs acts of righteousness and has faith will enter Heaven. Not even the tiniest speck of injustice will be done to him [or her].

Who can be better in religion than one who submits his [or her] whole self to Allah, lives righteously, and follows the way of Abraham, who was true in faith? Allah called Abraham His friend.

Inspired by Al Anam (The Cattle) 6: 74-79;
and Al Nisa (The Women) 4: 124-125

The Prophet (peace upon him) said, "Look for the Night of Power on the last ten nights of Ramadan when nine or seven or five nights remain out of the last ten nights of Ramadan."[57]

[57] Hadeeth: Bukhari: narrated by Ibn Abbas.

During Ramadan, we must evaluate our souls,
And determine if, beside Allah, we have placed idols.
We do not carve statues or paint images to worship,
But interfering in one's spiritual relationship
May be modern idols that really serve as foes.
Cigarettes, soap operas, and designer clothes,
Rock stars, movie stars, sports stars, and fancy cars
Are some things that may become rivals causing scars
On the soul of one who allows them to push away
The true God whom we must honor, adore, and obey.
With Allah's grace, such worldly things are contrary.
Like the sun and the moon, idols are temporary.
They rise in splendor, but limited is their space.
Everything will set except Allah and His grace.

Bism'Allah. AlhamdulAllah.

O Allah, on this twenty-first day of Ramadan, I ask You to keep me from despising those who have become lost in sinful lifestyles. I pray for the souls of those who have, not only caused spiritual impoverishment to our society, but are themselves the poverty. Their souls need redemption, and I pray that they realize this before it is too late.

Grant Your peace, grace, and mercy on Your servants witnessing for You against all odds. As pleases You, inspire the Ummah to improve witnessing skills through classes, lectures, and role playing.

Subhan'Allah! Amen.

Obedience

To Him is credited the primal origin of the skies and Earth. How can He have a [begotten[58]] son when He has no spouse? He has created all things, and He has full knowledge of all things. That is your Lord God! No deity is there except Him, the Creator of all things. Worship Him alone, and He has power to dispose of all affairs.

No vision can grasp Him, but His grasp encompasses all visions. He is beyond our comprehension, but He comprehends all.

"Now evidence has appeared from your Lord. If any will see, the benefit will be to his [or her] own soul. If any chooses to remain blind, the detriment will be his [or her] own. I [your Prophet] am not appointed to guard you."

Thus, We verbally elaborate on the verses so that it may be said, "You taught us well," and so that there is clarification for those who have sense.

Follow what came to you by inspiration from your Lord. No God is there except Him. Disregard those who assign partners [to Allah].

Inspired by Al Anam (The Cattle) 6: 101-106

The *Prophet (peace upon him) practiced seclusion in the mosque*[59] *during the last ten days of Ramadan up until the day he died. His wives continued the practice of seclusion after him.*[60]

[58] I added the word 'begotten' from the idea expressed in translations of several ayats, including Surah 19: 35: "It is not befitting Allah that He should beget a son. Glory to Him! When He determines a matter, He simply says of it, 'Be!' and it is." We are all children of God in the spiritual sense, but the Qur'an's purpose is to correct the addition of the word 'begotten,' which was erroneously added to the King James Version of John 3: 16 of the New Testament. The Greek word 'monogenes,' translated to 'only begotten,' means 'unique' (literally, 'one of a kind') and is so rendered in many modern Bible translations, including the French and Russian versions, for examples. Certainly, Jesus (peace upon him) was a unique child of God in several ways, none of which should be interpreted in a reproductive manner as implied by the word 'begotten.' The Master Creator (blessed and exalted is He) has no need or desire to reproduce as do His creatures.

[59] The Arabic word for devotional seclusion is 'itikaf.'

[60] Hadeeth: Bukhari: narrated by Aishah.

The vastness of splendid canyons cannot be captured
However panoramic may be the photo paper.
Elusive to the camera is a valley dense
Even if the camera has a wide-angle lens.
Greater still is the majestic vastness and depth
Of Allah who gives all creatures their very breath.
No lens can encompass the Master Creator,
And no printed page can be His container.

Bism'Allah. AlhamdulAllah.

O Allah, on this twenty-second day of Ramadan, I give thanks to You for photographers, artists, musicians, and writers who remind us of the wonders of Your creation. Guide their minds and hands to reflect Your glory and to honor You in all their beautiful works.

Grant Your grace, peace, and mercy on all those who have creative gifts but who are trapped in situations preventing them from being able to apply their gifts. As pleases You, inspire the Ummah to use imagination and creative energy to serve You better.

Subhan'Allah! Amen.

Day 23

Humility

O Humanity, here is offered a parable. Pay attention to it.

Those upon whom you depend, instead of Allah, cannot create even a fly, even if they all met together just for that purpose. And if a fly should snatch away anything [for example, a morsel of bread], (the challengers) would have no power to get it back. That is how feeble are the seeker and those [false gods] whom they seek. They have made no fair estimate of Allah, for Allah is Powerful and Almighty.

Allah chooses messengers from among angels and from among people, for Allah is All Hearing and All Seeing. He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and all queries are finally referred to Allah.

O Believers, bow and prostrate yourselves and adore your Lord. Perform goodness so that you may prosper. Strive for His true purpose. He has chosen you and has not made your religion difficult; it is the same religion as that of your father Abraham. He identified you as Muslims [those who surrender all to Allah], then and now.[61] The Messenger is to be a witness for you, and you are to be witnesses for others. Therefore, maintain worship, give charity, and take refuge in Allah. He is your Master –a Blessed Patron and a Blessed Savior.

Inspired by Al Hajj (The Pilgrimage) 22: 73-78

During the time that Allah's Messenger (peace upon him) was practicing seclusion in the mosque, he would stick his head into the house [which was next to the mosque] so that I [his wife] could comb and oil his hair for him. Whenever he was practicing seclusion, he never entered the house except for an urgent need.[62]

[61] The primary meaning of 'Muslim' is 'one who is totally submitted to God.' By this definition, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, for examples, were Muslims. A secondary meaning is 'a person who follows the established and organized religion of Islam,' but this meaning is, or should be, encompassed by the first meaning. Islam as 'the peace that passes understanding from true and complete surrender to God' existed as the religion of the prophets before it became established and organized with the revelation of the Qur'an.

[62] Hadeeth: Bukhari: narrated by Aishah.

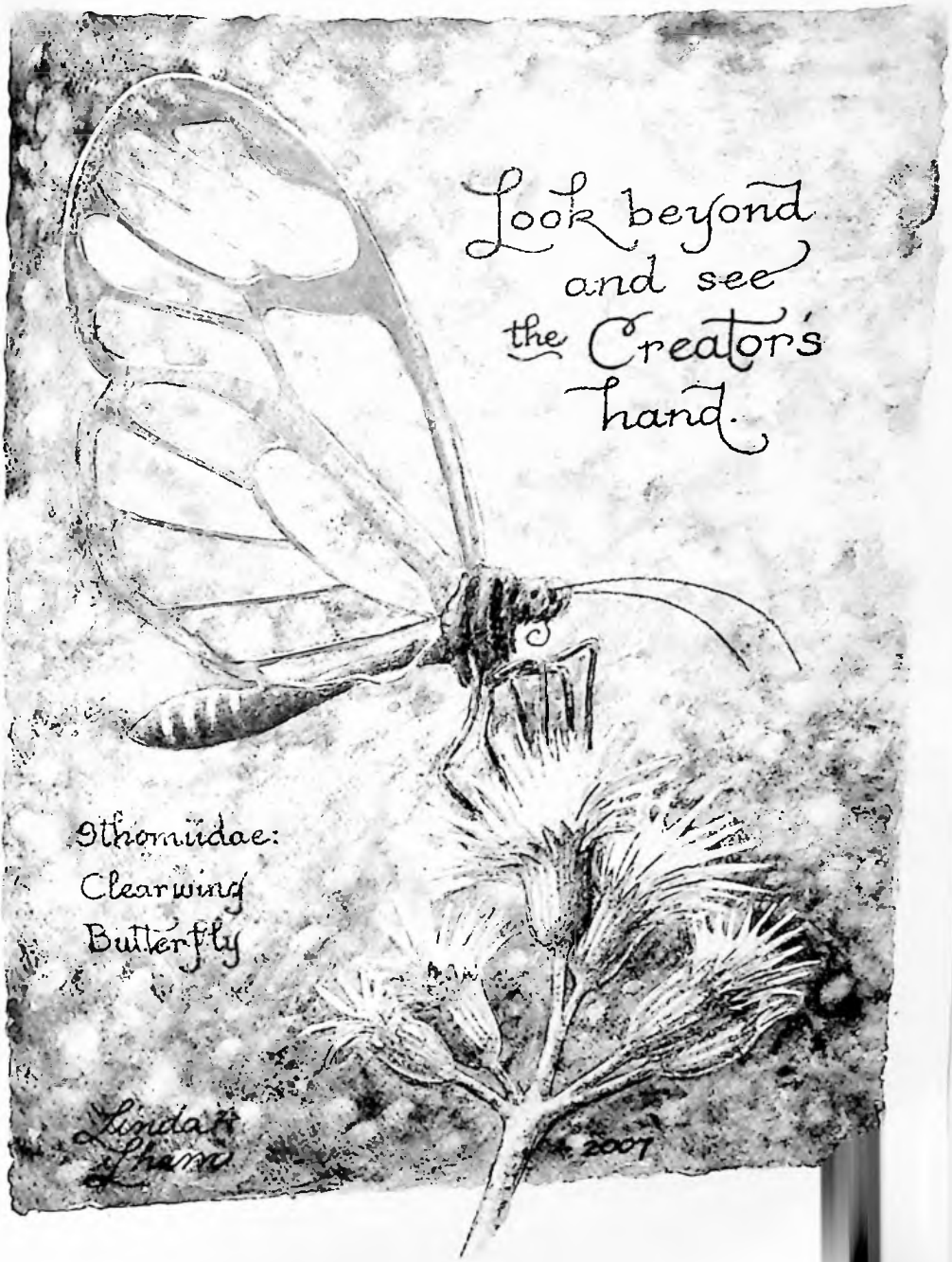
From the majesty of canyons go our adventures,
To the intricate details of smallest creatures.
We cross florid valleys and climb rocky cliffs
To discover amazing wonders such as this:
A transparent butterfly; have you seen such a bug?
Its delicate beauty would give your heart a tug.
The butterfly foregoes stunning colors and bands
So we may look beyond and see the Creator's hands.
Our lives, like the humble butterfly of clear wings,
Should reveal Allah as we witness to all beings.

Bism'Allah. AlhamdulAllah.

O Allah, on this twenty-third day of Ramadan, I ask that You rescue the children being raised in sinful homes without prayer and remembrance of You. Rescue those in abusive and negligent households. Have mercy on them, O Lord, and send invisible angels to show them your excellent ways. Let them meet You in the lives of Your true servants.

Grant Your peace, grace, and mercy on all those affected by domestic violence. As pleases You, inspire the Ummah to establish safe-houses and to provide services for victims.

Subhan'Allah! Amen.


Look beyond
and see
the Creator's
hand.
Sthenidae:
Clearwing
Butterfly
Linda Shaw
2007

Compassion

No kind of calamity can occur except what Allah allows,[63] and Allah guides the heart of anyone who believes in Him. Allah knows all things.

Obey Allah and obey His Messenger. If you resist, however, the duty of Our Messenger is only to clearly proclaim.

Allah! No deity is there except Him! Believers should trust in Him alone.

O Believers, certainly even among your spouses and children are your enemies, so beware of them. But if you forgive and ignore and forget [their faults], then Allah is also forgiving and merciful. Your possessions and your children may be only a test, but in the presence of Allah is the highest reward. So fear Allah as much as possible. Listen and obey. Invest in charity for your own sake. Those saved from their own covetousness are the ones who achieve.

When you loan to Allah a beautiful loan, He will double it for you, and He will grant you forgiveness. Allah is the Most Appreciative and the Most Patient, the Knower of the Concealed and the Evident, the Almighty, and the Most Wise.

Inspired by Al Taghabun (The Haggling) 64: 11-18

We discussed among ourselves about the Night of Power. I went to Abu Sa'id al Khudri, who was a friend of mine, and said to him, "Would you like to go with us to the garden of date trees?" He went, wearing a cloak. I asked him, "Did you hear Allah's Messenger (peace upon him) making mention of the Night of Power?"

He said, "Yes, we were observing seclusion with the Messenger of Allah in the middle ten days of Ramadan and came out on the morning of the twentieth. The Messenger of Allah addressed us and said, 'I was shown the Night of Power, but I forgot when it was, or I was caused to forget, so seek it in the last ten odd nights. I was shown that I was prostrating in water and clay, so anyone wanting to observe seclusion with the Messenger of Allah should return to the place of seclusion.'

[63] Anything is possible for God, but He has created for us a world in which everything is not possible. For example, when people choose to commit crimes, it is not possible for us to live in a crime-free world. As another example, it is not possible for the laws of physics to be suspended only whenever they interfere with the welfare of people and other creatures. We live in a world of struggle, which affects all people and all creatures and even plant life. God allows the constant struggle to provide opportunities for us humans to earn our way back to the original Paradise. How we respond to tragedies reflects the mettle of our faith. Miracles do happen sometimes, however, and we cannot always know what tragedies we have escaped by God's miraculous intervention.

"We did return but did not find even a patch of cloud in the sky. Clouds finally gathered and the downpour of rain was so heavy that the roof of the mosque, which was made of date palm branches, began to drip. We recited prayers, and then I saw the Messenger of Allah prostrating in water and clay, which I saw stuck to his forehead."[64]

Higher above the constant struggle our spirits rise.
Can we find a quantum doorway in distant skies?
Our trials mount portentously to make us stumble
As global tragedies, like taunting thunder, rumble.
We grieve when others suffer; we hurt when they bleed.
We sob when others wail; we feel want for their need.
But Allah, our Provider, has promises most sublime.
He will rescue us from creation's peril in His good time.
He will arm us with faith and courage to face what may be
And make us able to be generous to the deprived we see.

Bism'Allah. AlhamdulAllah.

O Allah, on this twenty-fourth day of Ramadan, I beg You to help those struggling and suffering due to personal tragedies and hopeless situations, natural disasters, and lack of medicines and health care. I beg for Your justice for victims of crime and unethical conduct. Help us believers to be vehicles of Your justice.

Grant Your peace, grace, and mercy on those who do not have the physical or mental ability to work or otherwise improve their lives. As pleases You, inspire the Ummah to establish programs to assist the disabled.

Subhan'Allah! Amen.

[64] Hadeeth: Muslim: narrated by Abu Salama.

Day 25

Charity

O Believers, donate from the good things you have earned and of the harvest of the earth, which We have produced for you. Do not plot to obtain something inferior, for the purpose of donating from it things you would not knowingly accept yourself.

Know that Allah is free of needs and worthy of all praise.

Satan threatens you with poverty and tempts you to act inappropriately. Allah, however, promises you His forgiveness and grace. Allah embraces everyone, and He is most knowledgeable.

He grants wisdom to those He has chosen, and, to those, He gives graciously. No one realizes this except those whose minds are pure.

Whatever you donate to charity or pledge to donate is known to Allah. There are no saviors for the oppressors [who neglect charity].

If your charity is publicized, it is blessed, but if you secretly give to those in need, that's even better for you. He will cover your sins for you. Allah is acquainted with what you do.

Certainly, the charitable men and women, who give to Allah a sincere loan, will gain multiple benefits and a generous reward.

Allah has promised, to believing men and women, gardens with underground rivers. They will live there forever in gorgeous mansions in Gardens of Eden, but the greatest gift of all is Allah's acceptance. That is true success!

Inspired by Al Baqarah (The Heifer) 2: 267-271;
and Al Hadeed (The Iron) 57: 18;
and Al Tawbah (The Repentance) 9: 72

Allah's Messenger (peace upon him) was the most generous person when it came to charity, but he was even more generous during Ramadan. Angel Gabriel met the Prophet every year during Ramadan until the month ended so that Allah's Messenger could recite the Qur'an to him. When Gabriel met Allah's Messenger, Gabriel found him freer than the blowing wind in giving.[65]

[65] Hadeeth: Muslim: narrated by Ibn Abbas.

Just a few thousand dollars can provide a water well
From your community to a distant village in peril.
Your donations can help purchase a sewing machine
To keep a young girl off the street and pure and clean.
Can you sponsor a sad orphan and reap Allah's blessing
By helping a child whose parents are dead or missing?[46]
These few things and many more are our opportunities
To donate from the good things and perform our duties.

Bism'Allah. AlhamdulAllah.

O Allah, on this twenty-fifth day of Ramadan, I ask You to bless the kind foster parents and to provide adoptive homes for children stuck in a faulty, foster-care system. If it is Your will, impress upon me the desire to adopt a child that may otherwise never know the love and comfort of a permanent home, or to sponsor an orphan.

Grant Your peace, grace, and mercy on children without parents. As pleases You, inspire the Ummah to become more involved in foster and adoptive parenting and orphan sponsorship.

Subhan'Allah! Amen.

[46] For information on orphan sponsorship, sewing schools, water wells, and other programs throughout the world, contact the Zakat Foundation, Illinois, (866) 499-6151, www.thezakat.org; Helping Hand, Michigan, (313) 279-5378, www.helpinghandonline.org; or Islamic Relief, California, (714) 676-1300, www.islamicrelief.com.

Day 26

Peace

Allah is He besides whom there is no deity. It is He who knows both secrets and proclamations. He is the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful.

Allah is He besides whom there is no deity. He is the King, the Holy One, the Peacekeeper, the Author of Faith, the Guardian, the Exalted in Might, the Final Authority, and the Supreme Being. Glory belongs to Allah who is above any partners attributed to Him! Allah is the Creator, the Designer, and the Sculptor. To Him belong the most beautiful names. All that is of Heaven and Earth declare His glory, and He is the One Exalted in Might and Wisdom.

We [God as the Majestic Unity] have indeed bestowed this [Revelation] on the Night of Power.[67] What will explain to you the Night of Power? The Night of Power is more wonderful than a thousand months. Therein descend the angels and the Spirit,[68] by Allah's will, on every errand. All is peaceful until the rise of morn.

Inspired by Al Hashr (The Exile) 59: 22-24; and Al Qadr (The Night of Power) 97: 1-5

[67] The Night of Power (Laylat al-Qadr) is the anniversary of the beginning of the revelation of the Qur'an. It falls on an odd night during the last ten days of Ramadan. It may be day 21, 23, 25, 27, or 29; no one is certain. On the 27th night (which is the night before the 27th day), the Prophet (peace!) always gathered his family and spent the night in prayer and worship.

[68] Although "the Spirit" is usually associated with the angel Gabriel, a broader understanding may be explored. In examining the meanings of "the Spirit," Abdulla Yusuf Ali wrote, "Man is gifted with the Spirit of God. In the spiritual Kingdom, we are all raised to the Light of the countenance of God, and His glory transforms us" [*The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an* (American Trust Publishers, original 1938 version), n 5677]. Muhammad Asad further explained, "The term 'ruh' (lit. 'spirit,' 'soul,' or 'breath of life') is often used in the Qur'an in the sense of 'inspiration' –and, more particularly, 'divine inspiration'—since, as Zamakhshari points out..., 'it gives life to hearts that were dead in their ignorance, and has in religion the same function as a soul has in a body'" [*The Message of the Qur'an* (England: The Book Foundation, 2003), n 2].

Allah's Messenger (peace upon him) said, "Islam is based on five principles: (1) to testify that none has the right to be worshipped except Allah and that Muhammed is the Messenger of Allah; (2) to offer salat[69] dutifully and perfectly; (3) to pay the zakat;[70] (4) to perform hajj;[71] and (5) to fast during the month of Ramadan."[72]

Our knowledge of Allah is like the tip of an iceberg
Thrusting upward from a sea veiling what does not emerge.
The Scriptures tell us of Allah's marvelous qualities,
But His awesome power remains veiled in mysteries.
Allah's transcendence may saturate your total being.
Perhaps you will glimpse through the sea of unknowing.
You may obtain more understanding of His splendor.
Such wondrous things do happen on the Night of Power.

Bism'Allah. AlhamduLlah.

O Allah, on this twenty-sixth day of Ramadan, may Your power come in the form of sweet rest for weary employees of mills, factories, and other businesses; clear thinking for struggling students; energy and inspiration for teachers; sustained, good health for doctors, nurses, and medical staff constantly exposed to patients' germs; sharpened perception for psychiatrists, psychologists, and counselors; and respite for parents stressed from the responsibility of caring for their families.

Grant Your peace, grace, and mercy on those who go to bed exhausted and depressed. As pleases You, inspire the Ummah to take time to relax and enjoy life and to spread joy to others.

Subhan'Allah! Amen.

[69] 'Salat,' the ritualized prayers and worship, are to be rendered five times per day. Personal, informal prayer is called 'du'a and may be said at any time.

[70] 'Zakat' is the required amount to be donated to charity; additional charity is 'sadaqa.'

[71] The spiritual pilgrimage to Meccah is called 'hajj.'

[72] Hadeeth: Bukhari: narrated by Ibn Umar.

Day 27

Splendor

We [God as the Majestic Unity] have revealed to (Prophet Muhammed) such as what We revealed to Noah and the prophets after him. We also inspired Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, the [twelve] Judaic tribes, Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, and Solomon. Also, We gave the Psalms to David.

We have already told you about some messengers, and We have not mentioned some others. Allah spoke audibly to Moses. There were messengers who announced good news as well as warnings. People can have no argument against Allah now that the messengers have come. Allah is Almighty and Judicious.

Allah testifies that, what He has bestowed upon (Prophet Muhammed), is bestowed with His knowledge. The angels also testify, even though Allah is a sufficient witness.

Messiah [Jesus] will never refuse to serve and worship Allah. Neither will the angels near to Allah. Those who do refuse to worship Him and are arrogant will be congregated before Him [to give account].

To those who believe and perform righteous deeds, He will grant them their rewards plus extra [blessings] from His grace. But with a wretched torment, He will punish those who are adverse and arrogant, and, beyond Allah, they will find no protector or savior.

O Humanity, evidence has come to you from your Lord. We have sent unto you a manifest light [the revelations to and the ministry of Prophet Muhammed]. For those who believe in Allah and cling to Him, He will show His mercy and grace and guide them to Him along the Straight Way.

Inspired by Al Nisa (The Women) 4: 163-166, 172-175

Whenever Allah's Prophet (peace upon him) broke his fast, he would say, "O Allah, for You I have fasted, and with Your provision I break my fast."[73]

[73] Hadeeth: Abu Dawud: narrated by Mu'adh ibn Zuhrah.

Have you felt it? Did you hear? Has it shown?
The majesty of Allah demands to be known!
That flicker in the corner –was it Jesus' face?
Did you smell Muhammed in that garden space?
Were those angels whispering, "Allahu akbar"?[74]
I thought I saw Abraham near and not far.
What an adventure –this manifested light!
How could anyone think that it's not right?

Bism'Allah. AlhamdulAllah.

O Allah, on this twenty-seventh day of Ramadan, I rejoice in the messages You have sent and for the messengers that brought Your glorious words. Thank you for the Torah and for the amazing story of Moses (peace and blessings upon him). Thank You for all Your prophets (peace and blessings upon them all). Thank You for sealing their messages with the beautiful ministry of Prophet Muhammed (peace and blessings upon him). Thank you for the Gospel[75] *and for Jesus (peace and blessings upon him). Help me to live the Gospel and help prepare the world for the day of Your reckoning.*

Grant Your peace, grace, and mercy on those floundering in spiritual confusion but sincerely seeking truth and understanding. As pleases You, inspire the Ummah to exemplify to other faiths the splendor of focusing on the consonant values of all religions while respecting the differences.

Subhan'Allah! Amen.

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[74] 'Allahu akbar' means 'God is the greatest.'

[75] The Gospel brought by Jesus (peace!) is the same as the teaching of the former prophets (peace!) and of Prophet Muhammed (peace!) –which is to devote one's entire self to God. Neither the Judaic prophets, Jesus, nor Muhammed (peace!) taught the concept of original sin (that each person is born a sinner), but that each person is born with the inclination to commit sin. As needs and wants of the physical world become more important to the physical self, a child begins to disassociate from the spiritual realm from which he or she came. It becomes necessary for a person to reconnect with the spiritual realm. According to the Christian Bible, Jesus said, "I tell you this truth: No one can see the Kingdom of God unless he [or she] is born again. I tell you the truth: No one can enter the Kingdom of God unless he [or she] is born of water [the physical birth] and of the Spirit" (John 3: 3, 5). The physical birth provides opportunities for the soul to earn the right, through grace, to re-enter the Paradise from which we were evicted.

Da
28

Inspiration

Abraham was indeed a model devoutly obedient to Allah, sincere in faith, and not one of the idolaters. He was grateful for the blessings of Allah, and Allah chose him and guided him to the Straight Way. We gave him goodness in this world, and he is among the righteous in the great beyond.

We have taught this inspiration: "Follow the religion of Abraham. He submitted to Allah and never considered other gods."

Invite others to the wonders of your Lord, using wisdom and beautiful advice. Make your persuasion in ways most gracious. Your Lord already knows who has strayed from His path and who has received guidance, so if you expose them [by pointing out their faults], expose them no worse than they have embarrassed you [in denigrating your religion]. Instead, show patience; that is indeed better for those who are serene. And do be patient, for serenity is a virtue from Allah. And do not grieve over them, and do not worry about their schemes. Allah is with those who fear and obey and also conduct themselves appropriately.

Inspired by Al Nahl (The Bees) 16: 120-123, 125-128

Allah's Messenger (peace upon him) made a small room during the month of Ramadan. (It was made from a mat.) He prayed there for a few nights, and some of his companions prayed behind him. When he realized [that he was being mimicked], he continued sitting [in prayer].

In the morning, he went out to them and said, "I have realized and have understood what you did, but you should pray in your own houses. The best prayer of a person is the prayer offered in his [or her] own home, except for the ritual prayers [in the mosque]."[76]

[76] Hadeeth: Bukhari: narrated by Zaid bin Thabit.

Ramadan has been a gold-panning expedition.
Have you found nuggets to preserve for your life's mission?
The ways of Abraham are our inspiration and goal.
His gold was true faith and friendship with the Lord of all.
We must invite others to this treasure we have found.
With wisdom and beautiful witnessing, we must confound
Evil forces and lifestyles that threaten indignantly
The health, wealth, and welfare of the whole of Humanity.
What will you do? What will you say? What role will you play?
What then, when it is clear that someone has lost the way?
Will you proselytize and condemn another's religion,
When you know full well that that is not the way of Islam?
Make your persuasion in gracious ways and with respect
So that others may see truth in your words and conduct.

Bism'Allah. AlhamdulAllah.

O Allah, on this twenty-eighth day of Ramadan, I give thanks for Abraham (peace and blessings upon him). I give thanks for the authority of his name among the Abrahamic religions. I pray that Jews, Christians, and Muslims will honor his name by establishing and maintaining one united, peaceful relationship and by using that relationship as a witness of peace and harmony for the world.

Grant Your peace, grace, and mercy on every sincere peacemaker. As pleases You, inspire the Ummah to make opportunities to change the negative connotations associated with Islam, replacing them with peaceful connotations.

Subhan'Allah! Amen.

Da
29

Victory

O Believers, save yourselves and your families from a fire with fuel of humans and brimstone –a fire over which are stern, severe angels who do not flinch at the commands they receive from Allah, but do exactly what they are told.

O Unbelievers, make no excuses this day. You are only being rewarded for all that you did.

O Believers, turn to Allah with sincere repentance in the hope that your Lord will cover your sins and admit you to gardens beneath which rivers flow. On that day, Allah will not permit the humiliation of the Prophet and those who believe with him. Their light will radiate before them and from their right hands[77] as they pray, "Our Lord, perfect our light and grant us forgiveness, for You have power over all things."

Truly, for the friends of Allah, there will be no fear or grief. For those who have faith and guard against evil, there is good news in this present life and in the life hereafter. There can never be a change in Allah's Word. This means victory!

Inspired by Al Tahrim (The Prohibition) 66: 6-8;
and Yunus (Jonah) 10: 62-64

I heard Allah's Messenger (peace upon him) say, "When you see the crescent [of the moon] for the month of Ramadan, begin fasting, and when you see the crescent for the month of Shawwal, stop fasting. If the sky is overcast and you cannot see the moon, then regard the month as having thirty days."[78]

[77] The right hand is used as a symbol for the conscious mind, and the left for the subconscious mind. When one consciously does what is right, the subconscious mind absorbs the light and does not harbor dark thoughts.

[78] Hadeeth: Bukhari: narrated by Ibn Umar.

I am born again through the experience of Ramadan.
I am renewed, refreshed; I have rededicated my Islam.
See the child inside me. I am pure. I am forgiven.
All praises are for Allah, Lord of Earth and Heaven.

Bism'Allah. AlhamdulAllah.

O Allah, on this twenty-ninth day of Ramadan, I humbly ask for Your grace and salvation on the Day of Judgment. Remember my good deeds and cover my sinful blunders. I pray that I may enter Paradise to eternally enjoy the company of my righteous family members and friends and all other good people who have blessed my life.

Grant Your peace, grace, and mercy to those struggling to live righteously even though their family members scoff at their religion. As pleases You, inspire the Ummah to create classes and support groups in which new Muslims may learn strategies for successful witnessing among family members and friends.

Subhan'Allah! Amen.

See the child inside me.
I am pure. I am forgiven.

Day 30

Love

Allah commands justice, good deeds, and generosity to relatives. He forbids all disgraceful deeds, injustice, and rebellion. He instructs you so that you may remember.

Fulfill the Covenant of Allah once you have entered into it [by submitting your whole self to Him]. Also, keep promises you have confirmed, because now you have made Allah your warranty. Allah knows all that you do.

What is of you must vanish; what is of Allah will endure. On those who patiently persevere, We will certainly grant their reward in response to the best of their deeds. To any man or woman who performs righteously and has faith, We will give New Life [a life that is good and pure], and, We will grant his or her reward in response to the best of his or her deeds.

When you read the Qur'an, seek Allah's protection from Satan, the rejected one. He has no authority over those who believe and put their trust in the Lord. His authority is only over those who follow him and who share in his associations.

Inspired by Al Nahl (The Bees) 16: 90-91, 96-100

A man came to Allah's Messenger (peace upon him) and asked him about Islam. The Messenger said, "For a total of five times each cycle of day and night, you are to offer five ritual prayers."

The man asked, "Are there any more ritual prayers required of me?"

The Messenger said, "No, but you may offer optional prayers."

The Messenger continued, "You must observe the fast of Ramadan."

The man asked, "Do I have to fast any other days?"

The Messenger answered, "No, but there are optional fasts you may do voluntarily."

The Messenger continued, telling the man about zakat.

"Do I have to give anything else," the man asked.

"No," the Messenger said, "but you may give more charity willingly."

The man said, "Considering Allah, I will do neither more nor less than all that." He then departed.

The Messenger of Allah said [to his followers], "If he is telling the truth, he will be successful."[79]

[79] Hadeeth: Bukhari: narrated by Talha bin Ubaidullah. When a person submits to Allah (blessed!) and does what Allah requires, gradually the person changes until he or she wants to give more, worship more, pray more, and perform more for the sake of Allah (blessed!).

From a cave of seclusion and a canyon full of stars,
We have traversed Ramadan to a crescent free of scars.
The bowl-shaped moon reminds of Allah's healing grace
As He has poured New Life into each emptied place.
What is of you must vanish for His gift that will endure.
Allah will help you persevere with a life good and pure.

We welcome Eid al Fitr, a time for celebration
For the miracles Allah has done in our recreation.
May He accept our prayers and deeds and fasting,
And may we receive His gift of life everlasting.
Our deeds are credits offered with our plea to atone,
But, in the finale, salvation is by His grace alone.

Bism'Allah. AlhamdulAllah.

O Allah, on this thirtieth day of Ramadan, may my former self be now completely erased and my revived self be drawn by the artistic strokes of Your amazing grace. May the spirit of Ramadan remain with me throughout the coming year as I look forward to the opportunities another Ramadan will bring. I pray that I may live to enjoy another Ramadan experience, but if You have willed that my life cease before then, I pray that You receive my soul in the pristine quality for which I have striven.

Grant Your peace, grace, and mercy on those believers who are mourning for deceased loved ones. As pleases You, inspire the Ummah to support and encourage the new interest in eco-friendly, green burials.[80]

Subhan'Allah. Amen.

[80] The first green burial site in the USA is Ramsey Creek Preserve, SC, where bodies are allowed to decay in a natural, bio-friendly manner. The preserve does not disrupt nature, but allows wild plants and animals to flourish.

Joy

Say, "O you, My servants who believe, fear and obey your Lord. Goodness is for those who do goodness in this world. Spacious is Allah's earth! Those who patiently persevere will truly receive a reward without measure."

For those who abstain from evil and do not fall into its worship [as a slave to evil] and who repent to Allah, there is Good News. Announce the Good News to My servants –those who listen to the Word and follow the best in it [without distortions and misinterpretations]; they are the ones whom Allah has guided, and they have pure minds.

For those who fear and obey their Lord, lofty mansions have been built, one after another. Beneath them, rivers flow. This is the promise of Allah. Allah never fails to keep His promises.

Do you not see how Allah sends rain from the sky and channels it through springs in the earth? He then uses it to bring forth a yield of various colors. You will see it turn yellow, and then He causes it to dry and crumble away. Truly in all this is a message of remembrance to people of understanding.

Inspired by Al Zumar (The Crowds) 39: 10, 17-18, 20-21

Malik saw some of the people of knowledge who, after their seclusion in the mosque during the last ten days of Ramadan, would not return to their families until they had attended the Eid al Fitr prayer with everyone else. Malik said, "I was first told about this from people of excellence, who have since passed away, and it is what I like most from all that I have heard about the matter." [81]

Abu Hurayra said that Allah's Messenger (peace upon him) forbade fasting on two days –Eid al Fitr and Eid al Adha. [82]

[81] Hadeeth: Muwatta: narrated by Yahya, who heard it from Ziyad, who heard it from Malik.

[82] Hadeeth: Muwatta: narrated by Yahya, who heard it from Malik, who heard it from Muhammad ibn Yahya ibn Habban, who heard it from al Araj, who heard it from Abu Huraya. Eid al Fitr is the day following the last day of the Ramadan fast. Eid al Adha is the Festival of Sacrifice during the annual pilgrimage (hajj).

O joyous Eid! Just a celebration?
If so, that is a sad situation.
Open the window of Eid al Fitr
And see life as a new adventure.
Let the golden light of Eid stream in.
Hear the new song of birds singing.
Don a new garment of tranquility.
Cover your head with refined humility.
Spread your wings of revived Islam;[83]
Never allow them clipped by Shaitan.[84]
Keep the faith and never despair;
By your side, Allah is there.

Bism'Allah. AlhamdulAllah.

O Allah, on this day of Eid Al Fitr, I ask that You remind me often of how blessed I am to have heard and accepted the truth of Your reality, Your presence, and Your words. How can I adequately thank You for blessing me with the gift of the knowledge of You? I will thank You by sharing Your gift with everyone I meet. Help me to remember to look for opportunities for witnessing, and help me to gladly make the best of every opportunity, no matter how awkward the situation may be.

Grant Your peace, grace, and mercy on me and my family and our home as we linger on this planet a while longer in order to serve You, the Author of our lives. As pleases You, inspire the Ummah to find peaceful ways to settle disputes among Muslims and with non-Muslims.

Subhan'Allah! Amen.

[83] 'Islam' in this context means 'your personal submission to God.'

[84] 'Shaitan' is the Arabic of 'Satan.'

Farewell

I sincerely hope, insh'Allah, that you have been blessed
Throughout Ramadan by daily words with poetry dressed.
If so, all glory and praise goes to Allah alone indeed.
I wish for you and your family a blessed and holy Eid.

Asalam alaykum[85] with strawberries, angel food cake,
And real whipped cream –not the stuff that's fake.

Linda "iLham" Barto

[85] 'Peace unto you.'